

Introduced \_\_\_\_\_  
Public Hearing \_\_\_\_\_  
Council Action \_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Action \_\_\_\_\_  
Effective Date \_\_\_\_\_

## County Council Of Howard County, Maryland

2010 Legislative Session

Legislative Day No. 13

### Bill No. 56 -2010

Introduced by the Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

AN ACT clarifying certain sign requirements specific to Downtown Columbia under certain conditions; allowing signs of a certain size in Downtown Columbia; allowing certain signs in Downtown Columbia under certain conditions; allowing certain signs in the County rights-of-way in Downtown Columbia; allowing for certain signs to be illuminated in Downtown Columbia; defining certain terms; amending certain definitions; making certain technical corrections; and generally relating to sign requirements for Downtown Columbia.

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Introduced and read first time \_\_\_\_\_, 2010. Ordered posted and hearing scheduled.

By order \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator

Having been posted and notice of time & place of hearing & title of Bill having been published according to Charter, the Bill was read for a second time at a public hearing on \_\_\_\_\_, 2010.

By order \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator

This Bill was read the third time on \_\_\_\_\_, 2011 and Passed \_\_\_\_, Passed with amendments \_\_\_\_, Failed \_\_\_\_.

By order \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator

Sealed with the County Seal and presented to the County Executive for approval this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2011 at \_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

By order \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen LeGendre, Administrator

Approved by the County Executive \_\_\_\_\_, 2011

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Ulman, County Executive

NOTE: [[text in brackets]] indicates deletions from existing law; TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS indicates additions to existing law; Strike-out indicates material deleted by amendment; Underlining indicates material added by amendment.

1           **WHEREAS**, the 2000 Howard County General Plan recognizes the unique nature  
2 and character of Downtown Columbia as the County’s largest and most urban mixed-use  
3 center containing office, residential, local and regional retail and regional entertainment  
4 uses and venues and establishes policy and implementing actions to encourage  
5 Downtown Columbia’s continuing evolution and growth as the County’s urban center;  
6 and

7  
8           **WHEREAS**, on February 1, 2010, following several public hearings and work  
9 sessions, the Howard County Council adopted Council Bill No. 58-2009 (“General Plan  
10 Amendment”) which approved an amendment to the General Plan, known as the  
11 Downtown Columbia Plan, and Council Bill No. 59-2009 (“Zoning Regulation  
12 Amendment”) for the purpose of revitalizing and redeveloping Downtown Columbia; and

13  
14           **WHEREAS**, the Downtown Columbia Plan builds on James Rouse’s vision of  
15 Columbia as a real city by envisioning Downtown Columbia as a dynamic, walkable  
16 urban center that looks to the future in its planning and design; and

17  
18           **WHEREAS**, the Downtown Columbia Plan seeks to create a more vibrant  
19 Downtown Columbia while also making Downtown easier to navigate; and

20  
21           **WHEREAS**, the Downtown Columbia Plan and the Downtown-wide Design  
22 Guidelines approved in Council Resolution No. \_\_\_\_-2010 envision a revitalized  
23 Downtown Columbia comprised of a mix of uses developed within a system of new  
24 streets, pedestrian pathways, shorter block lengths and buildings that form a strong street  
25 edge that will benefit from improved wayfinding and directional signage; and

26  
27           **WHEREAS**, the Downtown Columbia Plan recommends the creation of separate  
28 neighborhoods within Downtown Columbia that will have distinctive identities that can  
29 be promoted through the creative use of signage; and

1       **WHEREAS**, amendments to the Howard County Sign Code are needed to allow  
2 for greater creativity in the use of signage, to eliminate existing constraints that could  
3 inhibit the creation of a dynamic urban center, to support Downtown Columbia as a  
4 major financial and economic center, and to improve wayfinding, promote safety and  
5 eliminate confusion; and

6  
7       **WHEREAS**, these amendments to the Sign Code will allow for additional  
8 signage opportunities in Downtown Columbia to help create the vibrant and dynamic  
9 urban center envisioned by the Downtown Columbia Plan while providing improved  
10 wayfinding for those who live, work and visit Downtown.

11  
12       **NOW, THEREFORE,**

13  
14       ***Section 1. Be It Enacted by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland, that the***  
15       ***Howard County Code is amended as follows:***

16               *By amending subsections (a) and (c) to:*

17               *Title 3- Buildings*

18               *Section 3.501 “Sign standards by district”*

19  
20               *By amending subsection (e) of:*

21               *Title 3 – Buildings*

22               *Section 3.502 “Signs permitted in all districts”*

23  
24               *By amending subsections (h) and (j) of:*

25               *Title 3 – Buildings*

26               *Section 3.503 “Exemptions”*

27  
28               *By amending:*

29               *Title 3 – Buildings*

30               *Section 3.505 “Prohibited Signs”*

1           *By amending:*  
2           *Title 3 – Buildings*  
3           *Section 3.505A “Permitted signs in County rights-of-way”*

5           *By amending subsection (b) of:*  
6           *Title 3 – Buildings*  
7           *Section 3.508 “Illumination”*

9 *By amending:*  
10 *Title 3 – Buildings*  
11 *Section 3.514 “Definitions”*

### **Title 3. Buildings.**

## Subtitle 5. Signs.

**Section 3.501. Sign standards by district.**

(a) *General.* The following sign standards by district shall apply to every existing district and to every new zoning district classification hereafter created in Howard County; to commercial or industrial uses permitted as conditional uses under section 131 of the zoning regulations unless the Board of Appeals shall expressly provide for stricter conditions for signs or billboards in granting such uses; TO ALL AREAS WITHIN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA; and to the SEPARATE areas of residential, multifamily commercial and industrial uses in multiuse districts such as new town district (OUTSIDE DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA), planned community district and similar districts. The districts are defined by the zoning regulations and official zoning maps. Only signs as described herein and as may be described under section 3.502 "signs permitted in all districts," or section 3.503 "exemptions," shall be permitted in each particular district.

(c) *Commercial Districts, Commercial Areas, ALL AREAS WITHIN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, Industrial Districts and Industrial Areas.*

(1) *Size.*  $[[A]]$

1           A.     EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 3.501(C)(1)B OF THIS SUBTITLE,  
2                   total sign area of two square feet for each lineal foot of building  
3                   frontage shall be allowed. If the building has multiple frontage, an  
4                   additional sign area of one square foot for each additional lineal  
5                   foot of building frontage shall be allowed. The total area of all  
6                   signs erected on the lot and building shall be within the allowable  
7                   square footage. Where there is multiple frontage, no more than  
8                   two square feet of sign area for each lineal foot of building  
9                   frontage shall be allowed to face that frontage.

10          B.     IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, THE TOTAL SIGN AREA ALLOWED FOR A  
11                   BUILDING SHALL BE COMPUTED ON THE BASIS OF TWO SQUARE FEET  
12                   OF SIGN AREA FOR EACH LINEAR FOOT OF DOWNTOWN BUILDING  
13                   FRONTAGE, INCLUDING ALL BUILDING FRONTAGES ON BUILDINGS  
14                   HAVING MULTIPLE FRONTAGES. BUILDINGS WITH LESS THAN 60  
15                   LINEAR FEET OF DOWNTOWN BUILDING FRONTAGE SHALL BE  
16                   ALLOWED UP TO 120 SQUARE FEET OF SIGN AREA.

17       (2)     *Location.*

18          a.     *Flat wall signs.* Flat wall signs may be located anywhere on any  
19                   wall of a building, except that, above the first floor, no window or  
20                   part of a window shall be situated within the area, or surface area,  
21                   as defined herein, of such sign, or its supporting structure, nor shall  
22                   any such sign or part of such sign or its supporting structure cover  
23                   any window or part of a window. No flat wall sign shall extend  
24                   above the top of the wall. In the case of a multistory building  
25                   which has screening enclosing elevator shafts, stairs or heating and  
26                   air-conditioning units, a flat wall sign may be permitted within the  
27                   area of the screening.

28          b.     *Projecting signs.* [[Projecting]]

29                (I)     EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS  
30                           SUBSECTION, PROJECTING signs may project over public  
31                           rights-of-way only where there is no building setback, and

1 then it may project no more than 42 inches beyond the  
2 right-of-way line. It may be no closer than eight feet to a  
3 curblin without variance from the Board of Appeals,  
4 except that on commercial properties within the Ellicott  
5 City Historic District it may be no closer than three feet to a  
6 curblin without variance from the Board of Appeals, and  
7 must have a minimum clearance of ten feet above the  
8 finished grade of a sidewalk and 18 feet above any road,  
9 driveway or alley. No projecting sign or supporting  
10 structure shall project more than 42 inches from the wall of  
11 a building, nor be less than ten feet from the ground level at  
12 the base of the building, nor be higher than 25 feet from the  
13 ground level to the top of the sign on a multistory building,  
14 and above the first floor, no window or part of a window  
15 shall be situated within the area, or surface area, as defined  
16 herein, of such sign, or its supporting structure, nor shall  
17 any such sign or part of such sign or its supporting structure  
18 cover any window or part of a window. Furthermore, no  
19 projecting sign or supporting structure shall be located in  
20 such a manner as to obstruct the light and vision of a  
21 window. Every face of a projecting sign shall be considered  
22 as a separate sign for the purposes of computing the  
23 allowable area, and the sum of the areas to all faces of a  
24 projecting sign shall not exceed 25 square feet. No  
25 projecting sign or supporting sign or supporting structure  
26 shall extend above the top of the wall.

27 (II) IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, PROJECTING SIGNS INCLUDING  
28 UNDER CANOPY, AWNING SIGNS, AND BLADE SIGNS MAY  
29 PROJECT OVER PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY ONLY WHERE THERE  
30 IS NO BUILDING SETBACK OR THE SETBACK IS LESS THAN 48  
31 INCHES. A PROJECTING SIGN OR SUPPORTING STRUCTURE

1 SHALL NOT PROJECT MORE THAN 48 INCHES FROM THE WALL  
2 OF A BUILDING, NOR BE LESS THAN 8 FEET FROM THE  
3 GROUND LEVEL AT THE BASE OF THE BUILDING AND 18 FEET  
4 ABOVE ANY ROAD, DRIVEWAY, OR ALLEY. A PROJECTING  
5 SIGN SHALL NOT BE HIGHER THAN THE PARAPET LINE OF THE  
6 BUILDING OR 25 FEET FROM THE GROUND LEVEL TO THE TOP  
7 OF THE SIGN, WHICHEVER IS LESS. EACH FACE OF A  
8 PROJECTING SIGN SHALL BE CONSIDERED AS A SEPARATE  
9 SIGN FOR THE PURPOSES OF COMPUTING THE ALLOWABLE  
10 AREA, AND THE SUM OF THE AREAS TO ALL FACES OF A  
11 PROJECTING SIGN SHALL NOT EXCEED 25 SQUARE FEET.  
12 UNDER CANOPY SIGNS SHALL BE PERMANENTLY ATTACHED  
13 TO AN OVERHEAD CANOPY OR AWNING.

- 14 c. *Freestanding signs.* Where a building does not cover the full area  
15 of the property, business signs may be freestanding or ground-  
16 supported and may be located in the front yard. EXCEPT AS  
17 PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (G) OF THIS SUBSECTION AND IN SECTION  
18 3.502(E) OF THIS SUBTITLE, THE [[The]] height of the sign may not  
19 exceed one foot for each two feet the sign is set back from the  
20 right-of-way and shall not exceed 26 feet from the grade level to  
21 the top of the sign. Freestanding signs shall be permitted only  
22 where there is a minimum of 40 lineal feet of lot frontage. The  
23 maximum allowable area for a freestanding sign shall be one  
24 square foot for each one foot the sign is set back from the road  
25 right-of-way. The largest single face of a freestanding sign shall be  
26 considered for the purpose of computing allowable area under this  
27 section. No part of the sign shall extend beyond a property line or  
28 right-of-way line. Signs satisfying requirements for gas price  
29 posting are permitted up to an area of 32 square feet per face. Such  
30 signs may be affixed to the main freestanding sign and will not be  
31 assessed against the allowable area for the facility nor will they be

considered for purposes of determining setback in relation to sign area.

d. *Marquee signs.* [[Signs]]

(I) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS SUBSECTION, SIGNS may be placed on the vertical faces of a marquee provided no part of the sign shall project above or below the vertical faces of a marquee.

(II) IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, MARQUEE SIGNS MAY PROJECT BELOW OR ABOVE THE VERTICAL FACE OF A MARQUEE, PROVIDED A VERTICAL CLEARANCE OF EIGHT FEET IS MAINTAINED BETWEEN THE BOTTOM OF THE SIGN AND THE GRADE BELOW. THE HORIZONTAL CLEARANCE BETWEEN A MARQUEE AND THE CURB LINE SHALL NOT BE LESS THAN THREE FEET.

e. *Roof signs.* Single-faced signs shall be permitted on the front profile of a building provided that the top of the sign does not exceed the height of the building, as defined in the zoning regulations.

F. *TALL BUILDING SIGNS.*

(I) IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, BUILDINGS OVER 100 FEET TALL MAY HAVE TALL BUILDING SIGNS TO IDENTIFY TENANTS OR THE BUILDING NAME.

(II) ON A FLAT TOPPED BUILDING, TALL BUILDING SIGNS SHALL BE LOCATED BETWEEN THE TOP OF THE WINDOWS ON THE TOPMOST FLOOR AND THE TOP OF THE ROOF PARAPET OR WITHIN AN AREA 16 FEET BELOW THE TOP OF THE ROOF PARAPET. ON BUILDINGS WITH STEPPED OR OTHERWISE ARTICULATED TOPS, TALL BUILDING SIGNS MAY BE LOCATED WITHIN AN AREA 16 FEET BELOW THE TOP OF THE BUILDING OR WITHIN AN AREA 16 FEET BELOW THE TOP OF THE PARAPET OF THE MAIN PORTION OF THE BUILDING BELOW



1 THE STEPPED OR ARTICULATED TOP. TALL BUILDING SIGNS  
2 SHALL BE LOCATED ON A WALL AND MAY NOT BE LOCATED  
3 ON A ROOF, INCLUDING A SLOPING ROOF, AND MAY NOT  
4 BLOCK ANY WINDOWS.

5 (III) A BUILDING MAY HAVE NO MORE THAN TWO TALL BUILDING  
6 SIGNS ON ANY TWO SIDES OR QUADRANTS OF THE BUILDING.  
7 IN THE CASE OF A CYLINDRICAL, ELLIPTICAL, OR OTHER  
8 IRREGULARLY SHAPED BUILDING, THE BUILDING SHOULD BE  
9 CONSIDERED TO HAVE FOUR QUADRANTS. EACH QUADRANT  
10 SHALL INCLUDE 25% OF THE PERIMETER OF THE BUILDING.  
11 BOTH TALL BUILDING SIGNS ON A BUILDING SHALL BE  
12 IDENTICAL.

13 (IV) THE TOTAL AREA OF TALL BUILDING SIGNS FOR ANY  
14 BUILDING SHALL BE COMPUTED ON THE BASIS OF ONE  
15 SQUARE FOOT OF SIGN AREA FOR EACH LINEAR FOOT OF  
16 DOWNTOWN BUILDING FRONTAGE. THE AREA FOR TALL  
17 BUILDING SIGNS ARE NOT COUNTED TOWARD THE TOTAL  
18 SIGN AREA OF THE BUILDING AS CALCULATED IN SECTION  
19 3.501(C)(1)B OF THIS SUBTITLE.

20 G. *FREESTANDING MONUMENT-STYLE BUILDING NAME SIGN.* IN  
21 DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, A FREESTANDING MONUMENT-STYLE  
22 BUILDING NAME SIGN SHALL BE NO MORE THAN SIX FEET IN HEIGHT,  
23 OF WHICH NO MORE THAN THREE FEET SHOULD BE THE BASE AND  
24 REMAINING HEIGHT TO BE THE SIGN WITH TWO PARALLEL SIDES IF  
25 THE SIGN IS TWO-SIDED. THE MAXIMUM SIGN AREA FOR A  
26 FREESTANDING MONUMENT-STYLE BUILDING NAME SIGN IS 30  
27 SQUARE FEET PER SIDE OR FACE.

28 H. *VIDEO BOARDS.* IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, VIDEO BOARDS AND  
29 SCROLLING VIDEO MARQUEE SIGNAGE ARE ALLOWED.

30 (3) *Area.* The total area of all signs erected on the lot and building shall be  
31 within the allowable square footage.

- (4) *Content.* Signs allowed shall be identification signs only, as defined elsewhere in this subtitle.
- (5) *Unimproved property.* Signs for businesses conducted on unimproved lots shall be allowed a total area for all signs not to exceed one-half square foot for each lineal foot of lot frontage or 150 square feet overall, whichever is smaller. Signs on unimproved property shall comply with all other restrictions of subsection 3.501(c).
- (6) *Shopping centers and industrial parks.* A freestanding identification sign, stating the name of the facility and the major tenants, shall be allowed. The maximum allowable area of the sign shall be determined independently from the sign area allowed under subsection 3.501(c)(1) for building frontage, and it may be one square foot for each lineal foot of lot frontage or 200 square feet, whichever is smaller. If the facility has frontage on more than one public road, one such identification sign may be allowed for each frontage. The height of the sign shall not exceed 26 feet from the grade at the base of the sign; provided, however, an increase in height may be allowed not to exceed 40 feet from the grade at the base of the sign, if it can be shown to the Board of Appeals that excessive grade, building interference, bridge construction and the like exist.
- (7) *Illumination.* Illumination shall be in accordance with the restrictions set forth in section 3.508.
- (8) *Commercial directional signs.* [[Commercial]]
- A. EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH B OF THIS SUBSECTION, COMMERCIAL directional signs may be permitted by a variance by the Board of Appeals subject to a finding by the Board that the directional sign or signs are necessary for the public convenience and are consistent with the intent and purposes of this subtitle. Such signs shall be located only at road intersections and shall be subject to the approval of the Director of Inspections, Licenses and Permits of Howard County, based on criteria that he shall establish for the design and location of such signs. All directional signs at a

1 single intersection shall be consolidated in a single from or, if  
2 necessary, in several such frames. The maximum allowable area of  
3 any such consolidated sign shall be 12 square feet, and no more  
4 than four such signs shall be permitted for any single business. The  
5 content of such signs shall be limited to the name of the business,  
6 the principal product or services offered, and directional  
7 information.

8 B. IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, OFF-SITE COMMERCIAL DIRECTIONAL  
9 SIGNS ARE ALLOWED AS FOLLOWS AND ARE NOT COUNTED TOWARD  
10 THE TOTAL SIGN AREA OF THE BUILDING AS CALCULATED IN  
11 SECTION 3.501(C)(1)B OF THIS SUBTITLE.

12 (I) STANDARDIZED DIRECTIONAL SIGNS SUCH AS “ENTRANCE,”  
13 “EXIT,” “PARKING” ETC., SHALL BE ALLOWED. THESE SIGNS  
14 SHALL NOT CONTAIN ANY MESSAGE OTHER THAN THE  
15 DIRECTION TEXT. THESE SIGNS MAY BE PLACED ON PRIVATE  
16 LAND AND IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY. THESE SIGNS MAY  
17 CONTAIN AN ARROW OR GRAPHIC TO ACCENTUATE ITS  
18 MESSAGE. THE AREA OF THESE SIGNS SHALL NOT EXCEED SIX  
19 SQUARE FEET EACH.

20 (II) VEHICULAR DIRECTIONAL SIGNS ARE ALLOWED AND MAY  
21 CONTAIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD NAME OR “DOWNTOWN  
22 COLUMBIA” OR LOGOTYPE AND/OR GENERIC WORDING OF A  
23 DIRECTIONAL NATURE (SUCH AS “PARKING”, “LIBRARY”,  
24 “PLAZA”, “SHOPS”, “HOTEL”, “RESTAURANTS”, “GROCERY”,  
25 “THEATRE”, ETC.) THESE SIGNS MAY BE PLACED ON PRIVATE  
26 LAND AND IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY, AND SHALL BE  
27 DESIGNED TO DIRECT AND INFORM DRIVERS TO ALLOW  
28 EXPEDIENT MOVEMENT THROUGH DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA.  
29 POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR VEHICULAR DIRECTIONAL SIGNS  
30 SHALL BE INDICATED ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD CONCEPT  
31 PLAN. FINAL LOCATIONS MUST BE APPROVED AS PART OF A

SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN. THE AREA OF THESE SIGNS SHALL NOT EXCEED 18 SQUARE FEET PER SIDE.

(III) PEDESTRIAN DIRECTIONAL AND DIRECTORY SIGNS ARE ALLOWED AND MAY CONTAIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD NAME OR “DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA” OR LOGOTYPE AND/OR GENERIC WORDING OF A DIRECTIONAL NATURE (SUCH AS “PARKING”, “LIBRARY”, “PLAZA”, “SHOPS”, “HOTEL”, “RESTAURANTS”, “GROCERY”, “THEATRE”, ETC.). THESE SIGNS MAY BE PLACED ON PRIVATE LAND AND IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY, AND SHALL BE DESIGNED TO DIRECT AND INFORM PEDESTRIANS. POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR PEDESTRIAN DIRECTIONAL AND DIRECTORY SIGNS SHALL BE INDICATED ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD CONCEPT PLAN. FINAL LOCATIONS MUST BE APPROVED AS PART OF A SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN. THE AREA OF THESE SIGNS SHALL NOT EXCEED 18 SQUARE FEET PER SIDE.

(IV) DIRECTORY SIGNS WHICH CONTAIN SPECIFIC RETAIL OR OFFICE TENANT NAMES AND DIRECTIONAL INFORMATION ARE ALLOWED. THESE SIGNS MAY BE PLACED ON PRIVATE LAND ONLY. POTENTIAL LOCATIONS SHALL BE INDICATED ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD CONCEPT PLAN. FINAL LOCATIONS MUST BE APPROVED AS PART OF A SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN. THE AREA OF THESE SIGNS SHALL NOT EXCEED 12 SQUARE FEET PER SIDE.

**Section 3.502. Signs permitted in all districts.**

*(e) Permanent Identification Signs.*

- (1) Signs of a permanent nature setting forth the names of religious facilities, communities, subdivisions, apartments, schools, public/quasi-public institutions and neighborhoods shall be permitted and are exempt from the setback requirements established in subsection 3.501(c)(2)c. Illumination

1 shall be in accordance with restrictions set forth in section 3.508. [[Such]]  
2 EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (2), OF THIS SUBSECTION, SUCH signs  
3 shall not exceed 32 square feet in area nor six feet in height. Signs that are  
4 in existence on November 2, 1981, identifying a subdivision, apartment,  
5 condominium, village or neighborhood, which have been inventoried by  
6 the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits by March 1, 1982,  
7 shall be permitted and shall be exempt from the provisions of subsection  
8 3.505(a)(5) of this subtitle. WITHIN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, POTENTIAL  
9 LOCATIONS OF PERMANENT IDENTIFICATION SIGNS SHALL BE INDICATED ON  
10 THE NEIGHBORHOOD CONCEPT PLAN. FINAL LOCATIONS MUST BE  
11 APPROVED AS PART OF A SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

- 12 (2) MESSAGES ON DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA IDENTIFICATION SIGNS AND  
13 DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTIFICATION SIGNS SHALL BE  
14 LIMITED TO THE DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA OR NEIGHBORHOOD NAME. THE  
15 MAXIMUM SIGN AREA FOR EACH DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA AND DOWNTOWN  
16 COLUMBIA NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTIFICATION SIGN IS 32 SQUARE FEET PER  
17 SIDE OF THE SIGN.

18  
19 **Section 3.503. Exemptions.**

20 The following types of signs are exempt from all the provisions of this subtitle,  
21 except for construction and safety regulations and the following standards:

22 (h) *Flags.* Flags of a nation, State, municipality, educational institution or  
23 noncommercial organization. In addition, any commercial or industrial use may display  
24 its corporate emblem in the form of a flag, provided that there is not more than one such  
25 flag on any parcel. IN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA, FLAG POLES SHALL NOT EXCEED THE  
26 HEIGHT OF THE BUILDING OR 70 FEET, WHICHEVER IS LESS. BUILDING WALL MOUNTED  
27 FLAG POLES MUST COMPLY WITH THE PROJECTION CRITERIA FOR "PROJECTING SIGNS" IN  
28 DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA. EACH PARCEL SHALL BE ALLOWED A MAXIMUM OF THREE FLAG  
29 POLES.

30 (j) *Banners.* One TEMPORARY banner no more than 32 square feet in area is permitted  
31 for 14 days to announce the grand opening of an establishment. IN DOWNTOWN

COLUMBIA, PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY BANNERS ARE ALLOWED ON PRIVATE LAND AND MAY BE MOUNTED ON BUILDINGS, STREET LIGHTS, AND SIMILAR STRUCTURES SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:

(1) PERMANENT BANNERS SHALL BE MOUNTED WITH PERMANENT BRACKETS AND CONSTRUCTED OF CANVAS OR SIMILAR DURABLE AWNING TYPE MATERIAL. PERMANENT BANNERS ARE COUNTED TOWARD THE TOTAL SIGN AREA OF THE BUILDING AS CALCULATED IN SECTION 3.501(C)(1)B OF THIS SUBTITLE.

(2) SEASONAL BANNERS MAY BE DISPLAYED FOR UP TO 90 DAYS AND DO NOT COUNT TOWARDS THE TOTAL SIGN AREA OF A BUILDING PROVIDED THE BANNER DOES NOT IDENTIFY ANY SPECIFIC COMMERCIAL BUSINESS. SEASONAL BANNERS SHALL NOT EXCEED 16 SQUARE FEET PER SIDE.

(3) TEMPORARY BANNERS MAY ANNOUNCE A GRAND OPENING, ENTERTAINMENT, OR OTHER EVENT AND DO NOT COUNT TOWARDS THE TOTAL SIGN AREA OF A BUILDING. TEMPORARY BANNERS SHALL BE REMOVED AFTER 14 DAYS.

#### **Section 3.505. Prohibited signs.**

(a) *Removed Immediately.* The following signs are prohibited and shall be removed immediately in accordance with subsection 3.511(d):

(1) Signs which imitate an official traffic sign or signal or which contain the words "stop," "go slow," "caution," "danger," "warning," or similar words, except as provided in subsection 3.503(d).

(2) Signs which are of a size, location, movement, content, coloring or manner of illumination which may be confused with or construed as a traffic-control device or which hide from view any traffic or street sign or signal or which obstruct the view in any direction at a street or road intersection.

(3) Signs which advertise an activity, business, product or service no longer produced or conducted on the premises upon which the sign is located. Where the owner or lessor of the premises is seeking a new tenant, such

1 signs may remain in place for no more than 90 days from the date of  
2 vacancy.

3 (4) ~~[[Signs]]~~ EXCEPT AS OTHERWISE PROVIDED BY THIS SUBTITLE, SIGNS which  
4 contain or consist of pennants, ribbons, streamers, spinners, strings of light  
5 bulbs, or other similar or moving devices. These devices, when not part of  
6 any sign, are similarly prohibited. However, strings of lights which are  
7 used to display merchandise or for security purposes are exempt from this  
8 section and shall comply with section 3.508 of this subtitle.

9 (5) Signs which are placed on a County right-of-way, except signs permitted  
10 pursuant to section 3.505A of this subtitle.

11 (6) Signs which are posted or otherwise attached to utility poles or trees.

12 (7) Banners other than those permitted pursuant to this subtitle.

13 (b) *Removal within One Year.* ~~[[The]]~~ EXCEPT AS OTHERWISE PROVIDED BY THIS  
14 SUBTITLE, THE following signs are prohibited and shall be removed, if not made to  
15 conform with the provisions of this subtitle within one year of the adoption of this  
16 subtitle, in accordance with subsection 3.511(d):

17 (1) Signs which move in any manner or have a major moving part which gives  
18 an illusion of motion.

19 (2) Signs which are painted directly on the wall, exterior of a window or any  
20 other structural part of a building, unless the Board of Appeals shall grant a  
21 variance for such signs based on findings that they contribute significantly  
22 to the historical, architectural or aesthetic character in the area in which the  
23 sign is located.

24

25 **Section 3.505A. Permitted signs in county rights-of-way.**

26 (a) *Signs Not Requiring Prior Approval (Signs in Rights-of Way).* The following signs  
27 shall be allowed in the County rights-of-way without prior approval or permit:

28 Temporary real estate directional signs as specified in subsection 3.503(e).

29 (b) *Signs Requiring Prior Approval (Signs in Rights-of-Way).* The following signs shall  
30 be allowed in County rights-of-way provided that the sign is approved by the Department  
31 of Inspections, Licenses and Permits and that the Director of Inspections, Licenses and

Permits issues a revocable permit conditioned upon removal of the sign upon the County's request, at no cost to the County:

- (1) PROJECTING SIGNS AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 3.501(C)(2)B;
- (2) MARQUEE SIGNS AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 3.501(C)(2)D;
- (3) COMMERCIAL DIRECTIONAL SIGNS AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 3.501(C)(8);
- (4) TALL BUILDING SIGNS AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 3.501(C)(2)F;
- (5) STREET BANNERS AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 3.502(C);
- (6) PERMANENT [[Identification]] IDENTIFICATION signs [[for a community, development or subdivision project]]as set forth in subsection 3.502(e);
- (7) Identification signs for residential apartment complexes and condominiums as set forth in subsection 3.501(b)(4);
- (8) Temporary subdivision directional signs as specified in subsection 3.502(b)(3); and
- (9) Temporary signs announcing public, charitable, educational, or religious events as set forth in subsection 3.503(b).

### **Section 3.508. Illumination**

(b) *Blinking or Flashing.* [[No]] EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 3.501(C)(2)(H) OF THIS SUBTITLE, A sign shall NOT have blinking, flashing or fluttering lights or other illuminating devices which have a changing light operated as to create an appearance or illusion of writing or printing. A variance may be granted by the Board of Appeals for movement showing the date, the time and the temperature exclusively. Nothing contained in this section shall, however, be construed as preventing the use of lights or decorations related to religious and patriotic festivities. Beacon lights or search lights shall not be permitted as a sign for advertising purposes.

### **Section 3.514. Definitions.**

(a) *Area* means the sum of display surfaces, that [[area]] ARE enclosed by a standard geometric figure, the sides of which make contact with the extreme points or edges of the sign, excluding the supporting structure which does not form part of the sign proper or of the display. The area of a freestanding sign shall be the area of the largest single face. In



1 the case where there is more than one sign on the structure, the area shall include the  
2 aggregate area of all signs on the face. WHERE PRINTED OR GRAPHIC INFORMATION  
3 IDENTIFYING OR ADVERTISING A USE IS DISPLAYED WITHIN A LARGER GRAPHIC  
4 REPRESENTATION SUCH AS A MURAL, PAINTING, OR OTHER NON-COMMERCIAL ARTWORK,  
5 AREA INCLUDES ONLY THE AREA WITHIN THE SMALLEST STANDARD GEOMETRIC FIGURE OR  
6 FIGURES THAT CAN SURROUND THE PRINTED OR GRAPHIC OR BOTH, PRINTED AND GRAPHIC,  
7 INFORMATION IDENTIFYING OR ADVERTISING THE USE.

8 (b) *Banner* means a strip of cloth, canvas, plastic sheet, cardboard or similar flexible  
9 lightweight material with lettering on it [[and intended to be displayed for a limited  
10 period of time]].

11 (c) *Billboards* means outside structures which advertise products or businesses not  
12 connected with the site on which they are located.

13 (d) *Department* means the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits.

14 (e) *Director* means the Director of the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits,  
15 OR THAT PERSON’S DESIGNEE.

16 (F) *DOWNTOWN BUILDING FRONTAGE* MEANS EACH LINEAR SEGMENT OF A BUILDING  
17 PERIMETER LOCATED WITHIN DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA WHICH ADJOINS A PRIVATE STREET,  
18 PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY, DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY COMMONS, OR DOWNTOWN PARKLAND.

19 (G) *DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA* MEANS THAT AREA DEFINED AS “DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA” IN  
20 THE HOWARD COUNTY ZONING REGULATIONS.

21 ([f]) *Industrial park* means a tract of land ten acres or more in area that has been  
22 planned, developed and operated as an integrated facility for a number of individual  
23 industrial uses with special attention to circulation, parking, utility needs, aesthetics and  
24 compatibility.

25 ([g]) *Marquee* means a canopy or [[covering structure projecting from and]] ROOF-  
26 LIKE SHELTER attached to AND SUPPORTED BY a building WALL.

27 ([h]) *Person* means any individual, corporation, association, firm, partnership and the  
28 like, singular or plural.

29 ([i]) *Projection* means the distance by which a sign extends over public property or  
30 beyond the building line.

1 ([j])L) *Shopping center* means a shopping center shall be as defined in the zoning  
2 regulations.

3 ([k])M) *Reserved.*

4 ([l])N) *Sign* means a placard or structure containing graphic or printed information for  
5 identifying or advertising a use conducted on the premises where on such placard or  
6 structure is located. *Sign* shall include all exterior signs and all interior window signs.

7 ([m])O) *Sign, electric* means any sign, containing electric wiring. This does not include  
8 signs illuminated by an exterior flood light source.

9 ([n])P) *Sign, identification* means any sign which carries only the name of the, firm, the  
10 major enterprise or the principal product offered for sale on the premises, or other graphic  
11 or printed information relevant to the business conducted on the property where the sign  
12 is located.

13 ([o])Q) *Sign, projecting* means a sign, other than a wall sign, which projects from and  
14 is supported by a wall of a building or structure.

15 ([p])R) *Sign, roof* means a sign located on or above the roof of any building.

16 (S) *SIGN, TALL BUILDING* MEANS A SIGN THAT IS LOCATED NEAR THE TOP OF A BUILDING  
17 OVER 100 FEET TALL THAT IDENTIFIES TENANTS OF THE BUILDING OR THE BUILDING NAME.

18 ([q])T) *Sign, temporary* means a banner, pennant, poster or advertising display  
19 constructed of cloth, canvas, plastic sheet, cardboard, wallboard or other like materials  
20 and intended to be displayed for a limited period of time.

21 ([r])U) *Sign, wall, flat* means one affixed directly to the exterior wall or screening  
22 surface, confined within the limits thereof, and which projects from the surface less than  
23 12 inches at all points.

24 ([s])v) *Wall* means any vertical construction enclosing occupiable space.

25  
26 ***Section 2. And Be It Further Enacted*** by the County Council of Howard County,  
27 *Maryland, that this Act shall become effective 61 days after its enactment.*